

THURSTON IS UPHELD Contempt Case Goes to Pieces Easily.

Chief Justice Frear filed a decision yesterday afternoon in the case of the petition of L. A. Thurston for a writ of habeas corpus, discharging the petitioner from custody on the ground that there is nothing on the record to show that he had committed any offense or been convicted of or sentenced for having committed any offense.

What Judge Humphreys probably intended to do was to fine and imprison Mr. Thurston for contempt of court; but he did not say so. Neither the record, the judgment nor the minutes contain the word "contempt" nor do they say what the offense is, for which punishment is prescribed. The sentence is therefore void, as the court has no power to do or imprison any man on general principles, but only in punishment of a specific offense of which he has been specifically found guilty.

The whole sentence being illegal, there was no occasion to consider the other points made in Mr. Thurston's behalf, viz.: that the question which he refused to answer was a privileged one; and that the Grand Jury asking the question was illegally full.

Judge Frear's decision in full is as follows:

In the Supreme Court of the Territory of Hawaii—In Chambers.
Ex Parte Thurston—Habeas Corpus.
Submitted May 29, 1901; decided June 12, 1901. Before Frear, C. J.

The petitioner, having refused as a witness to answer certain questions put to him by the Grand Jury in the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, was ordered by the Court to appear and show cause why he should not be required to answer such questions. He made a showing which the Court held insufficient in law as to one of the questions asked, namely, as to the name of a client of his. He contended that he was privileged from answering this on the ground that to do so would be a violation of his confidential relation as attorney to his client. The minutes which are set forth in the return after reciting the proceedings at length, continue: "And the said L. A. Thurston being then and there by the Court ordered and directed to appear before the Grand Jury and furnish to it in response to its interrogatory the name of his alleged client, and the said L. A. Thurston then and there in open court declining to do so."

"It is ordered and adjudged that the said L. A. Thurston be and he is hereby fined in the sum of one hundred dollars; and it is further ordered and adjudged that said L. A. Thurston be and he is hereby committed to prison until such time as he shall express his willingness to appear before the said Grand Jury and answer the interrogatory aforesaid, to-wit: to disclose the name of his alleged client," etc.

It appears that the petitioner declined to answer a certain question and that thereupon the Court sentenced him to pay a fine and suffer imprisonment. It nowhere appears that the petitioner was convicted of contempt. A person cannot lawfully be sentenced for the commission of an offense until he has been duly convicted or found guilty of the offense. It may be perfectly clear from the evidence in a criminal case that a defendant is guilty of a crime, but it is not until a jury that the defendant has committed a certain offense, but the Court cannot sentence him for it until the jury has rendered a verdict of guilty against him. It is equally true that the Court cannot in a criminal case heard or tried by itself pronounce sentence until it has found the defendant guilty. A contempt such as it is contended the petitioner committed is a criminal offense and no sentence can be pronounced until after conviction in such a case any more than in other criminal cases. The minutes does not show that the petitioner was convicted of any offense, nor does it show of what offense he was convicted, if he was convicted of any offense.

In Ex parte Adams, 25—188, 892, the Court "Ordered that George H. Adams be sent to jail, and remain there until he signifies his assent to the Court to answer questions to the Grand Jury, or until final adjournment of said Grand Jury at this term of court." On habeas corpus before a Justice of the high court of errors and appeals, the following language, quoted in Church, Barb. Corp., sec. 321, was used: "But it is clear that a general order to imprison a party unless he has been convicted either by a jury or by the Court is a mere nullity. The law requires that before a sentence of imprisonment shall be passed against a party, he should first be convicted of an offense. In ordinary cases, this conviction must be by the verdict of a jury, in the case of contempts, it may be by the judgment of the Court. Still, in either case, the record must show a conviction. Now it will be seen from this return that there is no judgment of conviction for a contempt generally, or for a contempt in refusing to answer questions. There is not any conviction or adjudication by the Court that Mr. Adams had been guilty of a contempt. Without such judgment the Court had no right to commit him to prison, for the sheriff to detain him. It is true and was admitted on the argument, that Mr. Adams did refuse to answer questions asked by the Grand Jury, and it may be true that the Court considered that a contempt for which he deserved imprisonment, but no such judgment has been rendered in the case, and however much contempt the prisoner may have committed, it is not lawful to imprison him until convicted thereof by the judgment of the Court, which judgment and conviction must appear by the record."

See also Ex parte Frear, 30—184, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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